

Remembering the Periodic Table by Using a Silly, Vivid Story (John Rose, 12/2002)

Make up a story which contains key words that sound like the *first syllable or two* of each element, in order. Each key word should be something you can vividly imagine, in your mind's eye. The more clearly you see the image, the harder it will be to forget it. "Link" each image to the next, by connecting them in the flow of the story. Go ahead and make up nonsense, as long as you can clearly see the pictures in your imagination.

Here is an example. Feel free to make up your own images; you will more easily remember your own images.

[Row 1, #1-2] Say hello and laugh, "Hi!" and "He-He!" [H, He].

[Row 2, #3-10] There was a **light barrel** [lithium, beryllium]. Somebody **bored** a hole in it and out sprayed some **carbonation** [boron, carbon]. It was **night**, and the poor **ox** got sprayed in his sleep [nitrogen, oxygen]. He fell to the **floor**, and bumped his **knee** [fluorine, neon].

[Row 3, #11-18] I spilled my **soda** on my **mag-light** [sodium, magnesium]. I tried to wipe it up with **aluminum** foil, **silly** me [aluminum, silicon]. I went to see the **philosopher**, who told me about my **soul** [phosphorus, sulfur]. I spilled Clorox on him, and he said "aaargh!" [chlorine, argon].

[Row 4, #19-36] They grow **potatoes** in **California** [potassium, calcium]. But there was a **scandal** among the **Titans** [scandium, titanium]. Someone **vandalized** their sacred **chrome mongoose**, breaking it with an **iron** [vanadium, chromium, manganese, iron]. Luckily, there was a **cobbler** who fixed it with **nickles** and **copper** pennies, and threw it in the **sink** [cobalt, nickel, copper, zinc]. Afterwards, he went to **Gaul** and then **Germany** [gallium, germanium]. Sadly, the Germans poisoned him with **arsenic** [arsenic]. The **silly** undertaker left his **broom** with him in the **crypt** [selenium, bromine, krypton].

[Row 5, #37-54, and part of Row 6, #55-56] I had a **ruby**, which I **strained** through a **wire circle** [rubidium, strontium, "we" for yttrium, zirconium]. I was **nigh** a **bee**, but didn't get stung [niobium]. **Molly B.** has **taken Ruthann** on a **road** trip, where they became **pals** [molybdenum, technetium, ruthenium, rhodium, palladium]. They went to the **Silver** Casino, where they met a **cad**, who was an **indian** [silver, cadmium, indium]. Alas, they had to eat dinner out of a **tin** can, since they spent all their **auntie's money** [tin, antimony]. They went to the bank **teller**, who had a scary **eye** that was **seen on** them [tellurium, iodine, xenon]. The spunky girls told him to "**Cease!**" or else they would **bury him** [cesium, barium].

[Lanthanide Series, #57-70] Let's talk about this teller, who talks with a lisp. His name is Lance, but call him "**Lanth**" [lanthanum]. He spends his last money on breakfast **cereal**, and the **prays** for another **dime** [cerium, praseodymium]. He **kneels**, asking for a **dime** [neodymium]. You see, he had **promised** he would take his girl to the **prom**; her name is Samantha the **Samaritan** [promethium, samarium]. He actually takes her to **Europe**, where they hijack a herd of **cattle** and **turtles** [europium, gadolinium, terbium]. Using the stolen animals for food, they become chefs, real **dish pro's** [dysprosium]. They serve customers in **homes** and in **urban** settings [holmium, erbium]. They have special cooking **tools** which are **itty-bitty** [thulium, ytterbium].

[Rest of Row 6, #71-86, and part of Row 7, #87-88] Back to Molly and Ruthann's argument with Lance: He give them some of his **loot**; in fact, he gives them **half** [lutetium, hafnium]. This is a **tantalizing** amount of money, but Molly hides it under her **tongue**, to keep it out of the **rain** [tantalum, tungsten, rhenium]. The rain storm becomes a tornado, which whirls our adventurers up to the Land of **Oz**, over an **iridescent** rainbow [osmium, iridium]. In Oz, the lucky people eat off **plates** of **gold** [platinum,

gold]. But alas! Dissolving **mercury** is poured on the plates by evil **Taliban**, causing them to be as useless as **lead** weights [mercury, thallium, lead]. This is bad for **business** [bismuth]. But the smart businessman takes a **poll**, collects a **statistic**, and decides on a new **rating** [polonium, astatine, radon]. The successful businessman vacations in **France**, taking his **radio** [francium, radium].

[Actinide Series, #89-102] The businessman arrives in France, where he will **act in** a play as the hero Thor [actinium, thorium]. He **protects** the world from the evil planet trio, **Uranus**, **Neptune**, and **Pluto** [protactinium, uranium, neptunium, plutonium]. At the end of the play, he saves **America** [americium]. You know, some Americans are **curious** creatures, especially residents of **Berkeley, California** [curium, berkelium, californium]. But Albert **Einstein** is very **firm** that he never needed **mental effort** to win the **Nobel Prize** [einsteinium, fermium, mendelevium, nobelium].

[Rest of Row 7, #103-109] Back to the traveling girls again! Ruthann is out of money again, and can't even afford **low rents** [lawrencium]. Molly gets in **Ruth's Ford**, and they escape to **Dublin**, Ireland, where they visit the eastern **seaboard** [rutherfordium, dubnium, seaborgium]. They are easily **bored**, and the place is boring to them, but it is such a **hassle** to leave [bohrium, hassium]. So, as a happy ending, Molly marries a **mighty nerd**, who impressed her with his ability to memorize the periodic table [meitnerium].

Vocabulary notes: *lithe* = light, *vandalize* = destroy, *chrome* = shiny metal, *mongoose* = weasel-like creature, *Gaul* = France, *arsenic* = famous poison in murder mysteries, *crypt* = burial cave, *nigh* = near, *cad* = rude and obnoxious man, *urban* = in the city, *tantalizing* = appealing and tempting, *iridescent* = with rainbow-like colors, *poll* = survey of peoples' opinions, *statistic* = number resulting from a study, *Thor* = mythical Nordic god of thunder, *seaboard* = coast, *hassle* = inconvenience.

Appendix: Link every 5th element to a phonetic peg word, for quick reference by number: 5/B miners bore for boron in a **hill**, 10/Ne my knee on a **daisy** crushes it, 15/P the philosopher's **dolly** bursts into flames, 20/Ca a Californian pushes calcium up his **nose**, 25/Mn watch out for mongooses when swimming the **Nile**, 30/Zn there's a mess of **moss** in the sink, 35/Br Mr. **Mole** was locked in the crypt along with his broom, 40/Zr Dad gives Mom a **rose** and a fake diamond (zircon) for a cheap gift, 45/Rh on a road trip you can take the train and go by **rail**, 50/Sn after eating from a tin can, tie it shut with a shoelace, 55/Cs slap that rude teller across the face with a wet **lily**, and say "cease or be buried!", 60/Nd instead of kneeling on a dime, I knelt on some **cheese**, 65/Tb the chefs serve turtle **chili**, in the shell (yuck!), 70/Yb they have itty-bitty **wax** tools, 75/Re the **eagle** flying in the rain is getting wet, 80/Hg a **vase** full of mercury, 85/At a **valley** full of papers with statistics on them, 90/Th mighty Thor smashes an unpleasant **pizza** with his hammer, 95/Am he protects America by shielding it with a huge **pillow**, 100/Fm the cold, dry **sauce** is firm enough to step on, so Fermi walks on it, 105/Db at the Dublin seashore, the trained **seal** is entertaining.